

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-15, 17, and 18 are present in this application. Claim 1 is an independent claim.

**§ 112, second paragraph, Rejection**

Claims 14 and 15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

Accordingly, claim 14, as well as claim 8, has been amended to replace phrases contained in parenthesis. Applicant requests that the rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

**§ 102(b) Rejection – Kurahashi**

Claims 1-13, 17, and 18 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,937,212 (Kurahashi). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Embodiments of the claimed invention are directed to an image processing apparatus (e.g., image processing apparatus 1a, Fig. 1) having switching between three-dimensional image data and a two-dimensional image data.

Kurahashi, on the other hand, is directed to an image pickup apparatus capable of switching a panoramic image and a three-dimensional image. Thus, Applicant submits that Kurahashi does not disclose the image processing apparatus of the present invention.

Furthermore, Applicant submits that Kurahashi fails to disclose at least the claimed “reduction calculation means for reducing the number of a plurality of input image data, corresponding to a plurality of images that satisfy azimuth difference relations each other, in a lateral direction, respectively.”

The Examiner alleges that this claimed feature is taught in Kurahashi at column 2, lines 18-29, and column 4, lines 51-58.

According to the description in Kurahashi at column 2, “at the time of panoramic image pickup, the cross points between two entrance pupils and optical axes of two optical image pickup means are made coincident.”

The description in Kurahashi at column 4 states that,

“Reference numerals 3 and 4 represent an image pickup element for converting an optical image focussed by each of the optical image pickup systems 1 and 2 into an electrical image signal. In the following description, the optical image pickup system 1 and its image pickup element 3 are collectively called an optical image pickup system L, and the optical image pickup system 2 and its image pickup element 4 are collectively called an optical image pickup system R.”

Applicant submits that the description at column 2 pertains to image pick-up operation and does not teach the claimed “reducing the number of a plurality of input image data.” Applicant submits that the section at column 4 merely discloses optical image pickup elements in an optical image pickup system R. Applicant submits that this description also does not constitute the claimed image processing aspects including “for reducing the number of a plurality of input image data, corresponding to a plurality of images that satisfy azimuth difference relations each other, in a lateral direction, respectively.”

Still further, Applicant submits that Kurahashi does not teach the claimed “switching means” for switching and selecting one of three-dimensional image data prepared by the three-dimensional processing means and two-dimensional image data prepared by using one of the plurality of input image data.

The Examiner refers to a section in column 7, lines 30-38, for teaching the claimed “switching means.” The section at column 7 discloses a mode switch unit 63 (Fig. 6) for switching between panoramic photographing mode and a stereoscopic photographing mode. Thus, Applicant submits that the section in column 7 does not pertain to selecting three-dimensional image data prepared by a three-dimensional processing means or two-dimensional data. In addition, Kurahashi’s panoramic photographing mode forms an image by joining (i.e., synthesizing) together two images of an object based on a state of taking lenses 51 and 52. Claim 1 requires that two-dimensional image data be prepared by using one of the plurality of input image data.

For at least these reasons, Applicant submits that Kurahashi fails to disclose each and every claimed feature. Accordingly, the rejection fails to establish *prima facie* anticipation. Applicant requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

**CONCLUSION**

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact **Robert Downs** Reg. No. 48,222 at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.147; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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